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DOI:

[10.1177/0047117815598352](https://doi.org/10.1177/0047117815598352)

Document Version

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Citation for published version (APA):

Gutkowski, S. (2016). We are the very model of a moderate Muslim state: The Amman Messages and Jordan's foreign policy. *International Relations*, 30(2), 206-226. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0047117815598352>

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Stacey Gutkowski. We are the very model of a moderate Muslim state? The Amman Messages and Jordan's Foreign Policy, *International Relations*, 30(2), 2016.

Abstract. Despite its significance to one of the most problematic discursive binaries of the 'War on Terror', moderation has been a largely taken for granted theoretical and empirical category in the discipline of International Relations. To prompt further conversation, this article examines 'Islamic moderation' as part of Middle Eastern states' nation branding in the decade and half since 9/11, using Jordan as a case study. I argue that while Jordan's official and state-endorsed civil society efforts to promote 'moderate Islam' and interfaith dialogue stem in part from an authentic interest in promoting dialogue and peace, the Jordanian Hashemite regime has also used the Amman Messages to deepen political trust with the United States, attempting to instrumentalize the moral authority of religion as a form of state productive power. It has done so by playing on a myth of religious moderation which has resonated in both the Middle East and the West since 9/11.

Keywords. Jordan, moderation, Amman Message, interfaith dialogue, political trust, nation branding, War on Terror.

Introduction

One of the most familiar yet problematic discursive tropes of the so-called War on Terror is the binary constructed between 'moderate' and 'radical' Muslims. But despite its recent discursive prominence, moderation has been a largely taken for granted category in the discipline of International Relations.¹ Scholars outside IR, however, have recently begun to unpack it theoretically and empirically. Smith and Holmwood have sought to reclaim the 'elusive' analytical category, suggesting that it is not merely banal centrism or the antithesis of extremism, but a rich and coherent category of political practice.² Many scholars have stressed the normative, progressive, dialogic character of moderate political practice, its tendency towards 'civility, dialogue, reflexivity and tolerance for opposing viewpoints' and 'productive interactional practice'.³ However, regarding feminism, Roy has critiqued the ways in which the term 'moderation' is sometimes used to exalt, legitimize and discipline 'acceptable' political practice.⁴ What follows shares Roy's critical impulse.

This article takes up Smith and Holmwood's call to unpack moderation empirically and theoretically. To prompt new lines of scholarly enquiry about this category in IR, it analyses 'Islamic moderation' as part of Middle Eastern states' nation branding and use of 'culture as display' in the decade and half since 9/11, using Jordan as a thick case study.⁵ This dynamic has been particularly visible at global level in what has variously been called civilizational, intercultural, or interfaith dialogue, an arena of inter-governmental activity since 2000. This activity at state and inter-state level has attracted the attention of IR scholars in recent years.⁶ This article aims to bring that discussion into conversation with two other recent bodies of scholarship, on nation-branding and political trust, as well as deeper, critical engagement with the social construction of 'moderation'. Moderation is a highly unstable category of practice, though it may seem stable, self-evident and unproblematic. The opportunities for theoretical advancement in IR go well beyond the context of Western relations with the Middle East (which is the more modest terrain in which this article sits) and the conclusion alludes to some possible directions for further enquiry.

I am fundamentally sceptical that there is any coherence to the categories ‘moderate’ and ‘radical’ in international politics. Lacking identifiable ‘content’, these are discursive markers used by actors to build alliances, send political signals to their constituencies, and elide normatively and politically problematic actions. There is no ‘basket of goods’ or traits, whereby we can determine an actor’s intentions or identity as ‘moderate’. Even nonviolence is not a reliable marker. Notably, while the term moderation has come to imply something progressive and nonviolent in contemporary colloquial usage, governmentality as well as violence are part of the ongoing genealogy of so-called ‘moderate’ practice. For example, historian Ethan Shagan has written with great insight of the ways in which robust governance in the early modern period in England was justified through a discourse of moderation. Shagan notes that moderation was articulated as a combination of the development of individual restraint with restraint by government, of state survival and the security of subjects. He sees in this period ‘a broad politics of restraint in which moderation was simultaneously the harmony that subjects sought and the hammer with which they forged it’. He calls this moderation’s ‘apparent paradox, the ability to hold coercion and harmony in suspension’.⁷ ‘Moderate’ and ‘radical’ and their cognates are labels – both self-claimed and endowed by others – which take on meaning only within social and political relationships.

As Somer argues, what constitutes a moderate political position is always socially constructed as well as contextually dependent.⁸ What counts as political moderation in the Middle East is far from self-evident and Jordan is no exception. The term moderation has been used by actors in the Middle East alternately as a synonym for various related but not coterminous concepts including nonviolence, political pragmatism, social progressiveness, commitment to the democratic process, increased tolerance, pluralist norms, the ‘Arab Centre’ and alliance with the West.⁹ These do not mean the same things. For example, moderation in the Middle East should not be confused with Arab liberalism, though these terms are often used interchangeably by liberals themselves.¹⁰ Somer offers the term ‘centre’ as a more precise descriptor than moderation.¹¹ In his view, what constitutes the political ‘centre’ is not a fixed point but is determined by a dialectic process (moderation the verb, not the adjective) whereby groups adjust their claims to gain support. A range of actors in the Middle East claim the mantle of moderation when it suits them: socially liberal and socially conservative, progressive and reactionary, Western-sympathizers and those staunchly opposed. Still, while liberals attempt to claim the mantle of ‘moderation’ away from their Islamist competitors, particularly in their dealings with the West, it is not obvious that they can in fact claim it away from conservatives who participate peacefully in the democratic process and show what Schwedler has called ‘behavioural moderation’.¹² Complicating matters further, Marwan Muasher, former Jordanian foreign minister and Jordan’s first ambassador to Israel, has suggested that Western states have identified Arab moderation with a single issue – a willingness to work constructively with the Israelis on the peace process. (One could say the same for security cooperation with the West.) He argues that states who cooperate on this one issue are deemed ‘moderate’ by the West despite immoderate authoritarian practices within their own borders.¹³

Empirically, this article addresses Jordan’s Amman Messages and state-endorsed governmental and civil society interfaith efforts since 2004, based on fieldwork conducted in Amman, Jordan in the summer of 2013.¹⁴ I argue that while Jordan’s official and state-endorsed civil society efforts to promote ‘moderate Islam’ stem in part from a seeming authentic interest in promoting dialogue and peace, the Jordanian Hashemite regime has also used the Amman Messages as a calling card to the West, a way to grease the wheels of increased security and political cooperation which has not always been popular with the

population. Several scholars have accepted the Messages as unproblematic attempts to counter post-9/11 clash of civilizations narratives at home and abroad.¹⁵ Few have critically unpacked the relationship between these initiatives and other Jordanian foreign policy objectives. An important exception to this oversight is Browsers, who points to ‘the embeddedness of the Message[s] in domestic, regional and international political interests’.¹⁶ She argues that the 2004 Message has allowed the regime to quell domestic dissent and take a visible stance against sectarianism in the region while also aligning Jordan with US interests during the War on Terror.¹⁷ This article takes up this prompt.

The US and Jordan have cooperated for decades based on realist calculations, and there are many material reasons why US-Jordanian political trust has deepened since 9/11. Still religion has played a subtle but noteworthy role in this deepening, due to the combined salience of Islam during the so-called War on Terror and the genealogical evolution of Euro-American conceptions of religion as both private and irenic. In the wider context of the so-called War on Terror, the US and its allies have developed a binary view of ‘moderate’ and ‘radical’ Islam which relies on an overly narrow conception of what religion ‘is’, and designates actors as exclusively ‘moderate’ or ‘radical’ based on their willingness to support US security interests. This logic has in turn powerfully shaped how the US builds alliances and how other states have built alliances with it, requiring the performance of shared identities.

While, as Poggi suggests, religion does indeed have the power to shape the political and economic spheres through its ability to compel human action through emotive moral appeal, the US and its allies have sought to instrumentalize this power.¹⁸ And the logic of the War on Terror – in which ‘radicals’ have been the recipient of an often deadly security response while ‘moderates’ have often reaped benefits – has incentivized many actors to portray themselves as Islamic ‘moderates’ in the overly narrow terms of the War on Terror binary, a binary which proceeds from the securitization of Islam. Within this opportunity structure, the Hashemite regime has attempted to harness and deploy the moral authority of a very narrow conception of ‘religion’ as a form of ‘productive power’ in order to place itself in a more advantageous global and regional position.¹⁹ Jordan has done this by playing on a myth of religious moderation which has resonated in the Middle East and the West since 9/11. This article focuses explicitly on the Jordanian side of the equation, illuminating an aspect of global politics which is far less well-known to Western audiences than US foreign policy towards the Middle East since 9/11.

Moderation and ‘Brand Jordan’

In recent years critical scholars have analysed states’ ‘national branding’ strategies of public diplomacy, particularly those aimed at attracting foreign investment.²⁰ However, states adopt brands for various objectives, and Jordan is a case in point. Here I follow İğsiz’s conception of nation branding, which deploys Stoler’s ‘politics of comparison’.²¹ Nation branding in her view is a set of political moves by state officials to secure power in comparison to other states.²²

Historically, Western states have used the term ‘moderate’ as short-hand for Jordan’s pro-Western alignment. In turn, Jordan has promoted ‘moderation’ as an essential element of ‘Brand Jordan’ in its diplomatic relations with them. When asked how they would describe Jordan’s moderate foreign policy position, the discourse of its elites was strikingly consistent: [it includes] building bridges, reaching out, avoiding radical views...we are realistic, more

objective in the region; ‘we are not ideologues’; it is ‘variation – putting everything out in the open – letting everyone speak – this is best’; ‘We don’t have enemies, we’re very tolerant, we don’t see things in black and white...this is a mature population. People want quiet and peaceful reform’.²³ One Jordanian political analyst characterized moderation as being ‘close to the West, open to the outside world, pragmatic and dependent on other countries’.²⁴ However, elites also readily recognize the extent to which this is historically a pragmatic response to external pressures: instability on the borders with Syria and Iraq, dependence on Gulf powers and the West for economic support, additional Palestinian refugee flows.

This domestic tenability of the brand hinges on an important paradox. As Aronczyk notes, nation branding is neither externally determined nor internally generated, but is the product of a dialectic between the population and elites.²⁵ Varga also notes ‘nation branding cannot be successful without the participation of citizens who are at the same time representatives, stakeholders and consumers of the brand.’²⁶ On the one hand, there is convergence between the regime, elite, and most of the population – particularly the middle class – about the paramount importance of stability, if not always the measures used to obtain that stability. If Jordanian political life was defined by decades of widespread violence in the streets, the outward-facing national brand as moderate would be domestically and internationally untenable. On the other hand, the picture is not entirely rosy. Historically, King Hussein, father of the current King, repeatedly used force to prevent coups and to prevent the Palestinians from forcing Jordan into war with Israel. In the wake of the 1970-1 civil war, a delicate political balance was struck between East banker and Palestinian populations in Jordan: a ‘cold peace’, committed to nonviolence and to Hashemite rule. Working within the terms of the political liberalisation process which began in 1989, the main opposition Muslim Brotherhood followed suit, committing to nonviolent change and privileging stability.²⁷ However Jordan has seen some violent protest from other political forces since 1989 over austerity measures, normalization with Israel, and the pace of reform. These prompted a swift, sharp, security response from the regime as recently as 2013. Jordan’s treatment of its political opponents has also periodically attracted criticism from international human rights bodies. Critics of elite circles point to regime practices – the prosecution of protestors under anti-terrorism legislation, surveillance practices of the intelligence services (GID), curtailment of freedom of speech – as evidence that the regime’s claims to moderation are not the same as open-ness or political pluralism or liberal democracy.²⁸

Still, that most Jordanians quietly and pragmatically support the monarchy cannot be analytically overlooked. This paradox can be explained in part by Jordan’s status as what Brumberg calls a ‘liberalized autocracy’, where Arab regimes uses ‘an adaptable ecology of repression, control and partial openness’, including the prospect of political reform, to prevent challenges to the status quo, similar in some ways to Shagan’s ‘apparent paradox’ of moderation.²⁹ Non-regime actors adapt themselves to this environment to secure direct and indirect benefits from the regime, whether it be funding, patronage or simply political space to operate with less interference. Political quietism is simultaneously an honest choice and one which the regime tacitly and overtly incentivizes. Fieldwork revealed the extent to which the regime discourse of ‘moderation’ has infiltrated the discourse of supporters and opposition actors, to the extent which they are not fully conscious of themselves, in line with Lukes’ third dimension of power.³⁰ Informants regularly pointed to the external threats Jordan has faced from Iraq and now Syria since 2003 and the post-Arab Spring brutality of many of its regional neighbours to justify their support for continuing Hashemite leadership, perhaps as a constitutional monarchy.

It is worth noting, however, that ‘moderation’ is not a large part of Jordan’s Arab-facing national brand. Ryan has argued that Jordan has traditionally engaged in a small power strategy of ‘omnibalancing’ among its Arab neighbours, seeking alliances with powerful states while hoping not to attract the ire of others.³¹ Among Arab states Jordan has historically gained favour vis-à-vis its representation of the Palestinians and friendly engagement with its Ba’athist neighbours in Syria and Iraq. Its pro-Western stance has attracted suspicion and it has reaped no reputational benefits for making peace with Israel, from its Arab neighbours or its own population. Foreign policy pragmatism is characterized as practice rather than deep agreement. For example, one religious leader noted, ‘Jordan’s regional politics is about balance but that doesn’t mean you agree with everyone’.³²

The seeming coherence of the Western-facing brand begs the questions: where does Islamic moderation fit into this version of it, how and why? On that note, we turn to the Amman Messages of 2004 and 2007.

The Amman messages: ‘moderate Islam’ and Jordanian foreign policy

Varga has suggested that the external goal of nation branding goes beyond achieving finite foreign policy aims or securing foreign direct investment. Ultimate brand success is the creation of ‘popular ideas that people live by’, to create brands which ‘become tools in the factory of the social world that people use to create meaning and to build social environments’, echoing what Barnett and Duvall call ‘productive power’.³³ Since 2004 the Hashemite regime has voiced large ambitions: to change negative Western narratives about Islam, promote peaceful global exchange on the basis of religious ethics and values, and for moderation, particularly religious moderation, to shape the foreign and domestic policies of other Arab Middle Eastern states

Their primary vehicles for this has been the Amman Message and related dialogue activities. The Amman Message began as a sermon delivered by Jordan’s chief justice, Sheikh Iz al-Din al-Tamimi at Amman’s al-Hashimiyyin mosque on Laylat al-Qadr, 9 November 2004. Initiated and endorsed by King Abdullah II, it claims to represent the ‘historical, universal and unanimous religious and political consensus (*ijma*) of the *Ummah* (nation) of Islam in our day, and a consolidation of traditional, orthodox Islam’. Following Tamimi’s original statement, the Royal Aal al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought posed three questions to 24 senior scholars in the region to delineate the ‘true nature of Islam’: Who is a Muslim? Is it permissible to declare someone an apostate (*takfir*)? Who has the right to issue a *fatwa* (legal ruling)? Their responses are summed up in three points. First, it defines a Muslim as someone who adheres to one of the four Sunni schools of Islamic jurisprudence or one of two Shi’i schools. It also recognises the legitimacy of the Ibadi, Thahiri and Ash’ari schools of Islamic jurisprudence, Islamic mysticism (Sufism), and ‘true’ Salafism. Second, it states that any person who adheres to any of these schools of law cannot be declared *takfir* (an apostate). Third, it declares that only qualified muftis may issue fatwas and only within the interpretative boundaries of the eight *madhahib* (schools of jurisprudence).³⁴ It has so far garnered 552 signatories in 84 countries and remains open for endorsement.

While the Amman Message is intra-Islamic in focus, a 2007 follow-up message, *A Common Word between Us and You* was directed towards Christian scholars around the world.³⁵ The 29-page document which began as an open letter from 138 prominent Muslims, both Sunni and Shi’a, argues that ‘the future of the world depends on peace between Muslims and Christians’.³⁶ However, notably, the Amman Message has been more prominently

deployed by the Jordanians in the global political context, to both Western civilian policymakers and military personnel.

Though its efforts to establish a global profile in this area are recent, Jordan's interfaith activities date to the early 1990s. In 1994, Prince El Hassan bin Talal, the former Crown Prince, established two institutions: the Royal Aal al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought and the Royal Institute for Interfaith Studies (RIIFS).³⁷ From 1994-2004, Jordan's support for interfaith dialogue was 'meant to support [the Israeli/Palestinian] political process to create a better climate for peace'.³⁸ Since 2004, under the auspices of the Amman Messages, Jordan's efforts to promote moderate Islam shifted to ostensibly to provide a counter-weight to salafist and jihadist voices in the region and to educate the West about the variety of Islamic experience, particularly of nonviolence. The European Union has funded RIIFS efforts to promote the Amman message in Europe and the Middle East since early 2013. (One interviewee noted that this was at Europe's instigation rather than Jordan's.) A steady hum of activity from civil society and from Prince Hassan and Prince Ghazi has included a significant number of conferences and meetings among scholars. World Interfaith Harmony week was established following an UN resolution proposed in 2010 by King Abdullah II and Prince Ghazi.

The two 'Amman Messages' are part of broader trajectories in Jordanian domestic politics. The 1991 National Charter set out the national identity and parameters for the state's democratic evolution defined Jordanian identity broadly as Arab and Islamic, and subsequent efforts to define the nation followed suit. Official efforts to define and monopolize what counts as legitimate, 'moderate Islam' play upon the Hashemites' descent from the Prophet. However, as Adely notes, Jordanian society contains multiple competing social and political projects to define what counts as Islamic orthodoxy.³⁹ These multiple projects include those institutionalised groups who refuse to participate in democracy (Hizb al-Tahrir, the traditional Salafists, jihadist Salafists and da'wa groups) and those who do (Islamic Action Front, Du'a party, and the Wasat party) as well as looser, piety movements and practices.⁴⁰ The state vision (*din al-dawla*) is not all-encompassing and is entangled with, problematized and accommodated by actors representing myriad vernacular conceptions of Islam (*din al-milla*).

⁴¹ Kabatilo notes that the state promotes a vision of Islam 'which fit[s] in with its nation-building project, such as celebrating religious ceremonies, hospitality, loyalty and honour', while the Islamists promote ones like veiling and banning alcohol which set them apart from the state and allow them to criticize it.⁴² Since the 1950s, the regime has closely monitored and sought to control religious public spaces, religious education in public and private institutions and preaching in the mosques to prevent any threats to the regime.⁴³ All mosques, preachers and religious functionaries in Jordan are under the purview of the Ministry of Religious Endowments and Holy Places, and there has been a gradual bureaucratization and state co-option of Islam, culminating in a 1986 royal edict declaring state control and monitoring over all religious instruction in schools and preaching in the kingdom's mosques.⁴⁴

Browsers and Adely have both explored the more divisive features of the Amman Message.⁴⁵ They argue that the 2004 Message has helped undermine the claims of the opposition Muslim Brotherhood-affiliated Islamic Action Front and other groups with religious mandates which have flourished since the Islamic Revival in the region, with knock on effects for pluralism, democratization and reform.⁴⁶ Particularly since the start of the 'Arab Spring' in 2011, the Hashemites have deployed this discourse domestically to fend off challenges from a rising tide of social conservatism in Jordan, expounded by the tribes and the Islamists. Instrumentally, but perhaps more positively, the Amman Messages have also been used by elites to send a message to the Christian minority in Jordan. This minority

occupies a disproportionate number of leadership positions within the private sector and holds approximately 45% of the country's private wealth. With the mass migration of Christians from the region following wars in Iraq and Syria, the Hashemites have been keen to emphasize to Jordanian Christians the historic protection they have enjoyed in the Kingdom, to stem the flight of private sector capital and skilled workers.

Fieldwork revealed that while the 2004 Message was promoted domestically in schools and to imams, its promotion has gradually taken on a more outward-facing character over the course of 10 years. Though the Hashemites stress that the Amman Messages are primarily for regional and intra-Islamic consumption, they have an obvious, and more attentive, Western audience. In interviews with the author, several Jordanian political officials and religious leaders quietly admitted that the Amman Messages have had political advantages beyond their original intention, though they were reticent to expand on those. A former senior diplomat and former director of the Royal Institute for Interfaith Studies, when asked what the Amman message accomplished politically, replied 'nothing...it was soothing'. He noted that Jordan has continued to engage in interreligious dialogue activity since 1994 because 'it does not conflict with [our] political interests'.⁴⁷ Another former government minister called the Amman Messages a 'media gimmick' by elites which was 'lost in translation' for the rest of the population.⁴⁸

Taking up Browers' prompt, the rest of the article explores the Messages role in deepening Jordanian relations with the West, particularly the US, and the economic, political and security benefits Jordan has accrued. The Amman Messages are only one aspect of the Jordanian 'national brand', of which moderation is one part, and of which Islam is only one facet. However, Jordan's branding as moderately Islamic and supportive of interfaith dialogue has proved critical to building political trust with the West. This is due to its coherence with a myth of religious moderation which has become particularly salient in Middle Eastern and Western state relations since 9/11.

The War on Terror and the myths of religious moderation and mosaic

William Cavanaugh has argued that Western political traditions have tended to associate religion, particularly non-Christian religion, with violence: a 'myth of religious violence'.⁴⁹ This myth, he suggests, is a product of European history, particularly the emergence of the nation state from the ashes of the so-called 'Wars of Religion' and post-Enlightenment, secularization processes. However, he argues, this myth has also conditioned Western relations with others, most recently the Middle East. Related to this, many critical scholars of religion have demonstrated that a modality of imperial relations between West and non-West in the sixteenth through the late nineteenth centuries was the codification and designation of a series of cultural practices as 'religion' but also as barbaric, potentially violent, and inferior to Christianity.⁵⁰ Part of the European colonial mechanism, they argue, was to 'civilize' and govern these practices into something that looked more like ('nonviolent') Christianity or to directly orchestrate conversions to Christianity. These 'civilizing' practices were, I suggest, the other side of the coin, a myth of religious moderation, which is the product of the same historical trajectory Cavanaugh describes. It rests on the same false premises but has similar persuasive force, repeated even by those who are sceptical of it for political ends. Appleby has argued persuasively that religious traditions are double-edged, with both violent and irenic tendencies.⁵¹ It should perhaps not come as a surprise then that both 'religion's' violent and irenic tendencies would be mythologized.

In Europe, as religion was cordoned off to the private sphere post-Enlightenment, over a period of several centuries it gradually became associated in the European imaginary with interior belief, then civility, then femininity in the twentieth century and finally, in the last three decades of the twentieth century, with civil society. During the late twentieth century, in order to relate to the structures of liberal democratic governance, religious actors had to organise themselves as interest groups, speak the language of secular politics,⁵² defend their interests as social and ethical rather than political, and market their progressive and nonviolent credentials. In short, participation in the democratic process in the West after the Second World War has required that actors convincingly perform ‘religious moderation’.

This performance of religious moderation has become particularly visible and institutionalised in global politics since the turn of the millennium, facilitated by the salience of Islam to the so-called War on Terror. It is the wider organising frame for what Hurd calls the ‘restoration narrative’ in Western foreign policy and IR.⁵³ She argues:

‘The basic assumption animating this restorative turn...is that once religious moderates are understood, engaged and empowered, and religious fundamentalists identified, side lined or reformed, the problems posed by religion will lessen and religious freedom will spread across the globe.’⁵⁴

Hurd argues that ‘a rising tide of international legal and administrative initiatives, policies and campaigns’ depend on an assumed distinction between ‘good’ and ‘bad’ religion, where the former can be harnessed for ‘the global public good’. This is evident, she suggests, in a variety of Western public policies and programmes, including those promoting religious freedom, democratisation, human rights, good governance, transitional justice, foreign aid, emergency relief, counter-terrorism, peace-building, humanitarian intervention and nation-building.⁵⁵

Though Hurd specifically addresses Western policy, practice and attitudes, it is important to note that the global performance of religious moderation is a dialectic between Western actors beholden to the restoration narrative and those – in the non-West and the West – who seek to capitalize on structural opportunities provided by it. The myth of religious moderation is a *shared* organising frame and interfaith dialogue has been framed by it. In 2000, in response to Samuel Huntington’s post-Cold War ‘clash of civilizations’ thesis, Iranian President Khatami called for a global Dialogue of Civilizations.⁵⁶ After September 11th, efforts at intergovernmental, national and local levels have focused on the imagined axis between the so-called ‘West’ and ‘Islamic world’. Though ‘moderation’ has often been flagged by Western policymakers, scholars and civil society as a precondition for non-Western dialogue partners,⁵⁷ the thin criteria for what constitutes moderation is more often implied than articulated: a nonviolent, non-radical, non-rejectionist stance towards Western (usually US) foreign policies and a non-hostile stance towards Israel. At the same time Western governments have sometimes found the nuance of what counts as moderation or centrism in the Middle East difficult to grasp. For example, Lynch has noted Western resistance to seeing as moderate socially conservative Muslim voices such as Sheikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi as a barrier to dialogue.⁵⁸

Calling upon the myth of religious moderation, proponents of intercultural dialogue stress the universal irenic resources in religions and cultures for building peace. Western policy circles see it as a useful string to the diplomatic bow.⁵⁹ However, critics question the view that intercultural dialogue is an unproblematic supplementary mechanism for norm advocacy, such as the promotion of human rights. In IR, Jackson has noted that a dialogue of civilizations is an ‘unstable’ arrangement, which threatens to collapse into ‘one of the more

stable alternatives': cultural superiority or 'thoroughly depoliticized aesthetic rituals like ethnic food festivals'.⁶⁰ The Economist put the limitations more bluntly: 'Set-piece meetings among robed gentlemen (and a few long-suffering ladies) won't by themselves solve the world's problems, or even the world's inter-religious strains'.⁶¹ Dialogue can privilege and valorise some voices, while side lining others, such as dissenters and women. It can give the appearance of false pluralism, reify 'tradition', collapse hybridity and nuance, and police the boundaries of orthodox practice and identity. It may give the false appearance of consultation and equal partnership to distract from state political and economic policies. It may also reinforce the secular boundary that 'religion' is/should be concerned with social life not politics.

This line of critique, while relatively new for analysts of global politics, echoes long-standing reservations among theologians that ecumenical and interfaith dialogue emphasizes commonality while silencing dissenting voices and points of theological, legal and ethical impasse. Further, some have noted the particular distortive effects of the War on Terror and a US push for democratic reform in the Middle East on global interfaith dialogue.⁶² State-supported interfaith or intercultural dialogue also unfortunately sits within a palette of 'structural power' security and diplomatic strategies by the US and its Western allies⁶³ – the U.S. Human Terrain System and the British iteration, the Defence Cultural Specialist Unit – which have attempted to capitalize on religion and culture for strategic advantage.

Certainly the picture is far from straight-forward. Civil society actors – Muslim and otherwise – in the West and the Middle East have capitalized on opportunities to manoeuvre themselves into positions of international and domestic influence vis-à-vis other groups or to genuinely develop their community's political and social capacity, often from a position of structural disadvantage.⁶⁴ Interfaith dialogue has become a 'community of practice' which transcends the intergovernmental, governmental and sub-state levels and has brought these three levels into engagement.⁶⁵ This has allowed quieter voices to exercise normative persuasion over more powerful actors.

However, regimes in Muslim-majority states have also used their participation in global interfaith dialogue to deflect international pressure to institute political reform or recognise human rights, including religious rights. What counts as 'interfaith dialogue' has no fixed or consolidated meaning, for scholars or practitioners. Therefore it is open to appropriation and manipulation by actors. Saudi Arabia, Iran, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates are examples. Saudi Arabia has funded the Vienna-based King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz International Centre for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue since 2012.⁶⁶ Qatar and the United Arab Emirates have also been involved in the funding of projects for interfaith dialogue, the former through the Doha International Centre for Interfaith Dialogue, established in May 2008. This stands in stark contrast to their human rights records. States have also used their participation to co-opt political space from their opposition movements. For example, former Iranian President Khatami's efforts to promote a Dialogue of Civilizations agenda at UN level 'provided [him] with "propaganda points" to use against his domestic opposition and the United States'.⁶⁷ Dialogue is also a vehicle for states to intrude upon long-standing scholarly debates over who holds Islamic authority in the Sunni and Shi'a worlds.

Critically, the myth of religious moderation has its own genealogy in the Arab world and is not a Western import. The Levantine equivalent is reference to the 'mosaic', of multiple religious, ethnic and nationalist minorities living in peace with each other and with the Arab, Sunni majority. It is used to claim Levantine authority on interfaith and inter-

communal dialogue. This ‘myth of the mosaic’ collapses a complicated history of dhimmitude under Ottoman rule, washes over the unequal treatment of religious, ethnic and national minorities in contemporary states, inter-communal civil war in Lebanon, Iraq and Syria, a turbulent history of Jewish settlement in the Levant and the unequal treatment of women and the poor. The indigeneity and authenticity of the mosaic is claimed by Levantine actors in Jordan and Lebanon who compete with other, better-funded competitors in the field of interfaith dialogue such as Saudi Arabia the UAE and Qatar.

The myth of the mosaic is based on elements of truth but can be delineated from cosmopolitan conviviality found in many urban centres in the Middle East. While I remain deeply sceptical of state practices, following Roy, I also leave open the possibility of being able to designate analytically between states’ instrumental invocation of ‘moderate Islam’ and the everyday, convivial, often paradoxical practices of religious pluralism in Middle Eastern societies.⁶⁸ The next section interrogates how the convergence of the Western myth of religious moderation and the Levantine myth of the mosaic have helped to facilitate Jordanian-US political trust.

Political trust in US-Jordanian relations

In recent years IR scholars have teased out political trust as more than the outcome of rational calculations of interests.⁶⁹ Rathbun distinguishes between strategic trust (calculation of interests) and generalized and particularized varieties of moralistic trust (an overall assessment of the integrity and character of the partner).⁷⁰ Michel has expanded on this, building on Lahno’s account of the role of emotion in trust.⁷¹ Michel notes that a large component of political trust is ‘a non-representational, inarticulate and moralistic disposition which structures our perception of others in our environment’.⁷² Trust as a disposition is not the product of a ‘conscious, reflexive decision-making process’ but instead ‘precedes rational decision-making’.⁷³ Trust is, he thinks, the product of ‘pragmatic, phronetic’ knowledge gained through shared experience over time. Michel does not address material power, and the disparities are crucial to understanding the ebbs and flows of political trust between the US and Jordan. However, his conception is useful for illuminating two things: first, the importance of US perceptions of Jordan as moderate in sustaining political trust between them over time and second, the subtle, facilitative role of ‘religion’ in deepening US-Jordanian political trust after 9/11.

In November 1957 King Hussein asked bluntly: ‘does the US trust and believe in Jordan or not?’⁷⁴ Over the course of six decades, the answer has varied. Though Jordanian political elites like to claim an unbroken alliance with the US, from the end of the British Mandate to the present, the history is complex. Since 1957, the US has used economic and military aid, the CIA and the Sixth Fleet to support the regime, which they understood as critical to preventing the spread of radical threats to Israel and the free flow of oil.⁷⁵ However King Hussein’s brief 1967 pact with Nasser and periodic flirtation with the Soviets during the 1960s to extract further US military and economic aid harmed US relations.⁷⁶ However, US policy circles still considered Jordan to be moderate even during this tumultuous period. President John F. Kennedy characterized it as ‘a buffer state with a moderate government’ led by ‘a young, beleaguered fellow’ caught in ‘a race against time’.⁷⁷ Despite his sometime intransigence, King Hussein was considered a critical bulwark against rising tides of Nasserist and Ba’athist nationalism, as well as Soviet influence. US-Jordanian relations were

solidified through US support to King Hussein during the 1970-1 Black September war with the Palestinian Fedayeen.

During the 1970s and 1980s Jordan played an important role in the Arab-Israeli Peace Process, despite periodic friction between the US and Jordan.⁷⁸ During the Iran-Iraq War Jordan was an intermediary between Saddam Hussein and the US. King Hussein was angry at learning that the US and Israel had sold arms to Iran, prompting President Reagan to write 'our relationship has always been one of deep trust and nothing must change that'.⁷⁹ Relations suffered a more serious blow during the 1990-1 Gulf War when King Hussein declined to distance himself from Saddam Hussein and align fully with the US-led coalition. The US decision to cut off aid was only rescinded in 1994 with the signing of the Wadi Araba treaty with Israel.

Using Rathbun's distinction between strategic and generalized, moralistic trust, we can say that the period since 1994 is one of not only increasing strategic trust but also deepening generalized trust between Jordan and the US and Europe.⁸⁰ Between the 1992 Madrid conference where Jordan led the Palestinian delegation and the 1994 Wadi Araba treaty with Israel, Jordan established itself as a 'partner for peace' in US eyes and was designated a major non-NATO ally in 1996. During the period 1991-2001 the US also pressured the Hashemites to collaborate with the CIA-allied Iraqi opposition, particularly Kurdish groups. Kings Hussein and Abdullah II tried to steer a middle position between US pressure and population sympathies for Saddam Hussein, who had provided 50% of Jordan's oil supplies for free. Iraq was the main market for Jordanian goods and Jordan was the first to break the international embargo against trade and aid to Iraq at the end of the 1990s.

On the eve of 9/11, King Abdullah II had been in power one year when various overlapping crises hit. This included the collapse of the Oslo process on its western border; the threat of a US war with Iraq on its eastern border; and the internal pressures of an economic liberalization process. Relations with the US intensified almost immediately after 9/11 and took on a different character, with Washington more dependent on Amman's active cooperation than at any other point in history. Michel calls this 'reliance', a willingness to cooperate based on shared interests.⁸¹ Jordanian intelligence had particular expertise on the Arab Afghans, because many Jordanian jihadists went to Afghanistan during the 1980s and 1990s and its intelligence services had infiltrated jihadist groups. In the immediate aftermath of 9/11 the deputy chief of the CIA and other high-level officials went to Amman to talk about coordinating efforts. In recognition of its contribution, the US-Jordan Free Trade agreement, negotiated in 1995, was ratified in December 2001 (though not fully implemented until 2010). Jordan also became one of the top US aid recipients nearly immediately after it announced its support for the US invasion of Afghanistan.

Iraq was, however, a different matter given significant popular support for Saddam. Jordan was pulled in two directions by its extensive economic ties to Iraq and the US. In a 2002 meeting, King Abdullah II angered President George W. Bush with his strong stance against invasion. Jordan eventually softened its position, allowing Patriot missile batteries to be stationed on the border. Though not publicly acknowledged by the regime, Jordanian analysts familiar with this period said that Jordanian intelligence was also involved in recruiting Iraqis already in Jordan to the US cause and US special forces also entered Iraq through Jordan for clandestine operations prior to the invasion. In the words of one interviewee: 'This wasn't charity. We would have to live with the problem once the Americans left'.

However, over the course of the decade, relations between the US and Jordan strengthened further from what Michel calls reliance to trust.⁸² After the 2005 Al Qaeda attacks on central Amman hotels, organised by Abu Musab al Zarkawi, the head of Al Qaeda in Iraq and a Jordanian, cooperation with the US intensified. Journalists interviewed noted that Jordan engaged in considerable information gathering in Iraq on the Sunni resistance and Al Qaeda. However it is also said that they ‘flirted’ with the Iraqi resistance because they wanted them to counter Iranian influence in Iraq. While officially Jordan provided hospital equipment in Afghanistan, the extent of Jordanian intelligence cooperation there was revealed with the death of eight intelligence agents in Khost, Afghanistan in 2009, of whom was a relative of the King.

Where do the Amman Messages and related interfaith activities fit into this story? How has Jordan’s invocation of the Levantine myth of the mosaic and the Western myth of religious moderation facilitated Jordan’s efforts to build generalized political trust with the West? The Hashemites have come to use the Amman Messages as a calling card to the West, a way to grease the wheels of increased security and political cooperation. One example of this is how the Amman Messages have enhanced Jordan’s credibility with Western and other Arab militaries. The former army mufti and current Supreme Mufti noted that the US army was ‘very interested’ in the Amman message and it was ‘common’ for it to be discussed. For example, in 2009 Jordanian army imams went to Egypt during Eager Lion, the joint military exercise with the US, and had a meeting with participating soldiers. Jordanian imams also cooperated with the Afghan National Army and US personnel stationed in Afghanistan. In 2008 there were several exchanges between Jordanian imams and the US army chaplaincy, including a meeting with the US National Security Advisor with responsibility for the Middle East. However, the Supreme Mufti noted that in his view American chaplains’ knowledge of Islam was ‘very superficial’ and ad hoc; by contrast Jordanian muftis were far better informed about Christianity. Jordanian imams also advised Swiss, Saudi, British and Kuwaiti military personnel on Islamic moderation and combatting extremism. The Supreme Mufti noted that ‘Jordanians have become a reference for anyone who wants to fight extremism’, and that Jordan ‘is now the foremost country in spreading moderate Islam’. He noted King Abdullah’s speech before the US congress in 2007 as evidence of how Jordan is regarded as a credible speaker.

As the Amman Messages have gained traction in the West, Western states and civil society have in turn promoted Jordan as moderate and as moderately Islamic. For example, a November 2013 article in Al Shorfa (a PR tool of US Central Command) on Jordan’s efforts to contain Al Qaeda emphasized its efforts to ‘promote common ground and peace among the various religions and sects in the Middle East’, highlighting the Amman message, World Interfaith Harmony Week and A Common Word.⁸³ Congressional resolutions have commended Jordan as ‘a leader for progress and tolerance in the Arab world’ and the reign of King Abdullah II as ‘enlightened’.⁸⁴ In a 2008 speech, President Obama praised the King’s ‘example of moderation and modernization’.⁸⁵ In a 2010 speech on security cooperation with Mediterranean countries the Secretary General of NATO called it ‘a remarkable and strong message...a solid foundation for cooperation and partnerships across political, cultural and religious borders for the benefit of peace and humanity’.⁸⁶

The direct impact of the Amman Messages and related dialogue activities on US-Jordanian and EU-Jordanian relations is difficult to quantify and should not be overestimated. However, Jordan’s discourse of moderation has successfully permeated Western diplomatic discourse with diplomats regularly emphasizing ‘shared values’ alongside interests. For example, one Amman-based Western diplomat describing King Abdullah II as ‘one of us...a

mid-Atlantic king who increasingly shares our worldview'. A senior American diplomat similarly articulated a perceived symmetry between the Hashemites and the West as a matter not merely of interests but of deeply shared values: 'our values are synonymous; their values are our values'. While Hashemite elites are Westernized, the extent to which liberal democracies and at best partially democratized Jordan whose monarchy faces loud calls by tribal and Islamist forces for fuller participation share 'synonymous values' is an open question. However this attitude is an important part of the political landscape.⁸⁷ Structural and material explanations only illuminate a relationship of mutual 'reliance' based on interests.⁸⁸ They cannot make good sense of comments like 'their values are our values'. In interviews, Western diplomats and civil society actors regularly referenced the Amman Message as important evidence for this connection.

Several factors have moved relations beyond mutual reliance to more generalized political trust since the 2010 Arab revolutions. Some of these are structural: the instability of key partners like Egypt and Bahrain, and Jordan's relative political and economic stability despite rising waves of unrest in the region and civil war in Iraq and Syria. Four regional factors have both revealed what a trusted ally small Jordan has become and have continued to raise Jordan's profile as a 'moderate' state. First, King Abdullah II was a key confidant to Secretary of State John Kerry, seen as a positive influence on Fatah during the 2013 round of peace talks. Second, the collapse of Egypt as a security partner after the July 2013 army coup prompted the elevation of Jordan and Kuwait as US security partners. The move of the joint US-Arab security exercise, now called Eager Lion, to Jordan in 2012 is evidence of this, as is Jordan's participation in coalition action against Islamic State. Third, King Abdullah II is seen by Western powers as a moderate among the Arab voices needed to secure broad consent for a final international nuclear agreement with Iran. And fourth, Jordan's absorption of Syrian refugees has won it praise in the West. The international donor Friends of Syria conference was held in Amman in summer 2013 as was the World Economic Forum, and Secretary of State Kerry visited multiple times. However, Jordan's success cannot merely be ascribed to its diplomatic skill. Geography has played a significant role in persuading the US of its critical importance. Jordan has found itself situated between four states of critical import to US strategy in the region: between, as King Abdullah famously put it, 'Iraq and a hard place' to its east and west, and between a member of the so-called 'Axis of Evil' to the north and the state most critical to US energy security to the south.

In recent years US aid to Jordan has continued to increase as a Jordanian economic crisis continued to deepen. In 2008 Jordan and the US signed a 5 year memorandum of understanding to provide \$3.6 and \$3 million respectively in budgetary and military support. The US surpassed the EU as the primary donor during this period. While the EU (then EC) has provided economic support to Jordan since 1978, including budgetary support, it has also applied consistent pressure on political reform, civil society development and human rights, arguably more so than the US.⁸⁹ While relations with the EU are close – it has been one of Jordan's largest trading partners since the 1980s – it is still somewhat qualitatively different from its US relationship during the 9/11 wars.

Has Jordanian promotion of moderate Islam and 'interfaith harmony' been a part of its 'bandwagoning', with the US?⁹⁰ Or is it a form of balancing, speaking the language of religious moderation to the West while promoting its Islamic authority among its neighbours?⁹¹ Moving beyond this debate in the small state literature, Browning argues that smallness is not a given but a construct, that 'smallness can be told in different ways'.⁹² In the case of the Amman Messages, being small is constructed by Jordan as 'a claim to morality, legitimacy and the right to speak out on international issues'.⁹³ The Amman Messages are

one facet of the regime's attempts at what Chong calls 'virtual enlargement'.⁹⁴ One former foreign minister noted, 'It is part of the outreach of Jordan. You called it soft power and I like that. I think it's very, very aptly put'.⁹⁵ In the words of another former foreign minister: 'we are small so we do what we can' to have an influence in global politics and in the region.⁹⁶

Conclusion

As a calling card, the Amman Messages have helped to facilitate cooperation with the West, particularly security cooperation, through the joint performance of 'moderate shared values'. This performance has helped to move the US-Jordanian relationship and, to a lesser extent, the European-Jordanian relationships beyond mere reliance to political trust, which Michel argues has an emotional component.⁹⁷ The Amman Messages have had productive power because they seemed to policymakers to create a diplomatic 'space apart' where realist power calculations need not dominate but where states and societies could work together in a framework of trust, stability, generous goodwill, and hope towards higher human good. The notion that there can ever be 'space apart' from power and politics is a category mistake. However, this category mistake rests on the inherent paradox of religion. Poggi has argued, following Weber, that religion's social power derives from its ability to provide meaning and value-direction and to compel human action through emotive moral appeal, allowing it to influence political and economic life.⁹⁸ Paradoxically, this leaves it both open to political manipulation but also makes it a potent force for resistance in global politics.⁹⁹

Beyond an empirical focus on Islam and the Middle East, this article has attempted to bring moderation conceptually into dialogue with the social constructivist literatures in IR on nation branding and political trust. However, a more theoretically- and empirically-informed, critical account of moderation has the potential to illuminate an array of practices in global politics, contributing to the broader social constructivist literature on foreign policy, informing scholarship on power, identity, negotiations, state and non-state alliance building international law, norm diffusion, nuclear proliferation, democratization, global trade, humanitarianism, and also on non-state transnational activism. This particular case suggests the need to look carefully at the social construction of moderate identity in foreign and domestic policy, not least as a part of 'culture as display', because this display may mask authoritarian and anti-democratic practices or may have more monologic characteristics than dialogic.¹⁰⁰ Moderation also has much broader potential as a theoretical starting point through which to think through liberalism as a paradigm in IR theory, which relies heavily on a latent, under-theorised notion of moderate practice in global politics.

Acknowledgements: This research was funded through a small grant from the Faculty of Arts and Humanities, King's College London. The author is grateful to the anonymous reviewers for their comments and to Yazan for research assistance.

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